

News Release

Flash Flood Dangers – What You Need to Know



USDA Forest Service Kisatchie National Forest

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Flash Flood Dangers – What You Need to Know

Pineville, La. (May 3, 2013) – Kisatchie National Forest Supervisor, Mike Balboni, wants to raise awareness of the dangers of flash flooding that is possible during summer months especially for communities near flood prone bodies of water and for campers. A flash flood is a serious weather event for forest visitors because rising flood water is extremely dangerous—a sudden surge can claim victims in less than one minute.

Any intense, heavy rain that falls in a short amount of time can create flash flood conditions in a low-lying area, according to the National Weather Service, and it can happen at a moment's notice at any time of the year.

“Many of our visitors like to camp overnight,” explained Balboni. Statistics show that often flash floods in the U.S. occur after dark, when campers are asleep. “When a flash flood strikes at night, it's nearly impossible to know how deep and fast the water is moving. It is also very disorienting to wake up suddenly during a storm. Campers need to be weather-ready every time they visit the forest. Outdoor safety isn't something to take lightly.”

During a flash flood, rapidly rising water can reach heights of 30 feet or more. The velocity of a flood surge can easily roll vehicles, tear out trees, destroy bridges and undermine roads. A low-lying area can become a death trap in a matter of minutes. “There is very little time to react,” said Balboni, “Forest visitors need to be aware about weather conditions and potential storms. Families should discuss how they would alert each other and climb to safety if rushing water arrives.”

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Weather experts say the best defense is to be weather-ready before a storm hits. It is a good idea for visitors to check the National Weather Service forecast before they leave home, and be alert for changing weather conditions while visiting the forest.

The National Weather Service is our nation's exclusive and trusted source for weather forecasts and warnings. Their meteorologists use the most advanced flood warning and forecast systems in the world. Whenever severe weather is forecasted, forest visitors need to go home early. While outdoors, always be alert for sudden storms and the sound of rushing water.

Flash Food Facts

1. When visiting Kisatchie National Forest always be alert for heavy rains and sudden changes in the weather, especially at night. Whenever severe weather is forecasted, go home or stay home.
2. When water rises at a camp site or recreation area, climb to higher ground immediately. If traveling, do not drive across roads that are covered with water. Make safe choices.
3. A battery powered weather radio, smart phone app or cell phone mobile alert can help you stay tuned-in to weather conditions before and during your outdoor activities. But remember, your cellular provider may not offer services and alerts in remote outdoor locations like forests and wilderness areas.
4. The National Weather Service is our nation's exclusive and trusted source for weather forecasts and warnings.
5. A rapid surge of water can claim victims in less than one minute.

For more information about Kisatchie National Forest contact the Forest Supervisor's Office in Pineville at (318) 473-7160 or you can visit www.fs.usda.gov/kisatchie

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